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# BOOK OF QUATRAINS



*Frederic Rowland Marvin*



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# A BOOK OF QUATRAINS





# A BOOK OF QUATRAINS

ORIGINAL AND TRANSLATED

BY

FREDERIC ROWLAND MARVIN

"

*"How strange a thing is life, with its many moods, reflected well in the short poems and terse sayings of wise poets! In the Epigrams of Martial, and in the Quatrains of later writers, the world is described with brutal frankness. The poets disclosed what they saw, and what they saw all men may behold in their verses with equal clearness if they will."*

—ARCHÆOLOGIA.



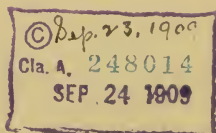
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TO  
THE MEMBERS OF  
THE AUTHORS CLUB  
OF NEW YORK  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF  
AMBROSIAL NIGHTS  
THESE QUATRAINS ARE DEDICATED



THE author of this little book has here brought together a few original and some translated quatrains that have been elsewhere published. To these he has added about a hundred original quatrains that here for the first time make their appearance in print. They were written in odd moments, and reflect the varying moods of one who, from the quiet and seclusion of his library, has observed with curious eye the ever-changing panorama of human life. No system of philosophy is represented and no theory of human life is taught, but the author believes that they may furnish some food for contemplation to those who, like himself, view from without rather than from within, the toil and conflict of man's mind in the rush and turmoil of our modern world.



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ORIGINAL



## HEINE

DERISION curled his lip,  
And in his smile was scorn;  
Yet bloomed the golden rose  
Beside the iron thorn.

## SHELLEY

THE sorrows of the world to music sweet  
Our English Ariel set,  
And in his perfect verse the tenderest love  
With deathless daring met.

## ALFIERI'S TOMB

CANOVA's marble! — Alfieri's dust!  
Genius divine and heavenly art!  
Vain were they both had Passion kindled  
not  
The flame of love in woman's heart.

## JUNIUS

UNKNOWN to all, yet knowing all too well,  
Thyself a *nom de plume*, how trenchant  
was thy blade!  
The years are flown, thy mighty foes are  
dead,  
And still refuse the laurels on thy brow  
to fade.



## HELEN

FOR Helen burned the towers of Troy,  
Those lordly walls are flaming still;  
Uncheck'd the fires of passion rage,  
And modern Helens have their will.

## BOOKS

OUR friends, as years advance, depart,  
But noble books remain;  
In them the blessed dead return,  
To dwell with us again.

## AN HONORARY DEGREE

THE college gave him LL.D.,  
It made him happy as could be;  
And happy college! for its share  
The fool endowed a Latin chair.

## THE HALL OF FAME

BY numbering noses we have made men  
great,  
Glory bestowed where glory there was  
none;  
Consider this, aspiring sons of men,  
By votes conferred, fame is no longer  
won.

## WHICH?

THE snow-white poppy or the green-leaved  
weed! the better, which?

De Quincey loved the flower; while in his  
London home, Carlyle

Consumed the fragrant weed. One calmly  
dreamed, the other growled:

On both impartial Fame, the lovely girl,  
bestowed her smile.

## SATAN

OF Satan all our priests have made too  
much,

As though with God he played at chess;  
And, matching love with hatred, cried out  
“check! —

My curse on every soul you bless!”

## EXPERIENCE

HE only charts the heavens for me,  
Who sails himself that upper sea;  
His teaching must from knowledge flow,  
If he would have me with him go.

## DANGEROUS WEAKNESS

WHAT most I fear is not yon giant clad in  
steel,  
But that sweet-tempered fool I cannot  
trust;  
He trips my soul with silly counsel and ad-  
vice,  
While I can deal the giant thrust for  
thrust.

## A LOUD CALL

How loud to Tipping church the urgent  
call —

Ten thousand and a costly city house !  
From other churches soundless every call  
As the soft footsteps of a nimble mouse.

## CURED

THE skillful surgeon feared he could not  
live,

And so he wisely slew him with a knife;  
He might have died, poor fool, like other  
men,

Had not the healing art destroyed his  
life.

## LOVE

No man can love, and from his fellowmen  
The all-transforming passion hide;  
It changes every feeling of the soul,  
Exalts his courage, and subdues his  
pride.

## THE AMERICAN CHAUFFEUR

WHAT cared the chauffeur that a dozen  
folk be killed?  
Our laws are still more dead than are  
the men he slew.  
The wheelless rabble crowd the busy thoroughfare —  
There are too many men, we well can  
spare a few.

## WAR

OUR far ideal is the distant peace,  
But the strife has too its sacred mission  
now;  
Behind the cruel sword we rightly dread,  
It is the mailed hand that drives the  
plow.

## HASTE MAKES WASTE "

" GREAT wits will jump ! " and so will nim-  
ble fleas.  
I pray you, Master Stern, remember  
this:  
The greatest wits take time, and never fail  
Of what the jumping fools are sure to  
miss.

## SIXTY

SIXTY — how swift the flying years go by!  
One scarce begins to live, when he must  
die;  
Yet I *have lived*, though I should live no  
more,  
And I have found life sweet from stem to  
core.

## THE DIVINE DOUBT

MUST I believe? Good friend, I doubt  
much more  
Than you have ever thought there was  
to doubt;  
And yet with equal joy and service I have  
lived  
Your forms of worship and your creed  
without.



## AGNOSTICS

How fade youth's golden dreams from  
view;  
Mid-life invites the critic-crew,  
Who pierce our hoary fables through,  
Yet cannot tell us what is true.

## MEETING OF THE FREE-RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION

A FREE-RELIGIOUS farce of warring creeds  
and men,  
Wherein the Heavenly Vision none behold!  
What boots it now which form of worship  
lives,  
Since Love is dead, and all her altars  
cold?

## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

NOR science true, nor yet a Christian cult,  
But Mumbo-Jumbo in the brain;  
And a new Bible by our lady writ,  
With single eye to worldly gain.

## HOW TO ESCAPE DOUBT

WOULD you your doubts escape?  
Behold the path of weal! —  
Live less in what you think,  
And more in what you feel.

## VALUE

BETTER than fairest pebble is,  
In yonder brook you saw,  
The diamond that was scorned because  
It had an ugly flaw.

## TOO LATE

GOD tricks no soul; none are deceived by  
fate;  
And when the moving finger writes, " Too  
late! "  
Upon the ruined walls of life, decay  
Makes plain the truth that hope had passed  
away.

## CASTLES IN SPAIN

DEAR friend of other days no more,  
And friend of those that still remain,  
What boots our wealth of golden hours,  
If all our castles are in Spain?

## RECRUITS

ON every corner: "Wanted, young men  
to enlist!"  
Pictures of ships, and soldiers in their  
colors bright  
Entice the callow striplings, and away they  
march,  
For some unworthy king and worthless  
flag to fight.

## EQUITY

THE other side of stern requital is reward,  
Together in one common soil they grow;  
Their living roots take hold on justice, and  
behold!  
Who scorns the one must see the other  
go.

## LIFE AND DEATH

NOR life nor death we understand,  
But one we love and one we fear;  
Perhaps in other worlds than this,  
No great distinction will appear.

## MEN FEAR THE TRUTH

MEN long to know the Truth,  
And yet the Truth they fear;  
The heavenly prophets speak,  
And they refuse to hear.

## RIGHT BETTER THAN PEACE

FOOLS cry for peace while cruel wrongs  
abound,  
And sing of love while hate survives;  
The thousand years of peace we would not  
know,  
Till right and justice change our lives.

## THE UNKNOWABLE

WE cannot know  
What we have wrought;  
Life far exceeds  
Our utmost thought.

## HERESY

“ Do you deny the devil? ” asked the pious  
priest,  
“ ’Tis whispered you no more believe in  
hell.”  
“ E’en so, good priest! I now believe in  
God,  
And must be counted worse than infidel.”

## EARLY TRAINING

HOLY Religion, I thy word believe;  
Yet why? I never studied aught to  
know.  
Ah, me! the truth to tell, it was because  
From infant's cradle I was started so.

## CHANCE

"NONE but the brave deserves the fair,"  
Yet oft the coward wins the maid;  
I've seen the hero travel far,  
And for his pains bring back a jade.



## MATERIALISM

A FAITH that grasps the outer shell  
But never seeks for hidden fruit,  
And to explain the soul of song  
Would weigh and measure pipe and lute.

## TRANSCENDENTALISM

A DARK abyss where nothing is ;  
Adown whose silent spaces deep,  
From naught to naught, with wild delight,  
The modern saint and sibyl leap.

## ASPIRATION

As longs the star for night,  
The flower for the sun;  
So longs my soul for Thee,  
O Holy One.

## THE EVENING OF THE LORD'S DAY

AND now to rest — the sacred day is o'er!  
O Soul, it was a blessed day of Grace,  
Made beautiful with holy love divine,  
And with the shining of thy Saviour's  
face.

## ASSURANCE

How, when and where — of these I may  
not know,  
My times are in Thy hand;  
Through calm and storm alike, my boat,  
unharm'd,  
Draws near the heavenly land.

## BEYOND THE HARBOR-BAR

WHY weep, sweet heart? the night draws  
nigh,  
When tears and laughter all shall cease;  
The hours use well that still remain,  
Beyond the harbor-bar lies peace.

## THE UNIVERSAL MOTHER

DEATH, kindly mother, gently rocks in love  
The coffin-cradles of the old;  
To sweet and dreamless slumber croons us  
all,  
When life's brief story has been told.

## TRUTH

THERE danger dwells where dwells not  
Truth;  
Nor gold, nor gems, nor rosy youth  
Shall friendly be, when she hath fled;  
The soul that knows her not is dead.

## HERE AND NOW

“WHAT is a ghost?” inquired a little child:

I gently pressed its trembling hand,  
And softly whispered, “You behold a  
ghost,

And this bright world is spirit-land.”

## PASSION

WHO tastes not Passion's burning cup,  
The wine of knowledge never drains;  
Like childhood's hours, his life is filled  
With infant's joys and infant's pains.

## THE USELESSNESS OF WRAN- GLING

MEN may argue, discuss and contend  
About sects and parties and schools,  
But a touch of sweet love in the world  
Makes all the debaters seem fools.

## A SELFISH HEART

How oft our trembling nerves we drug,  
Neglecting the disease;  
The trouble is a selfish heart,  
That loves its own sweet ease.

## FRIENDSHIP

LOVE burns the heart with ceaseless flame,  
But friendship, like the summer air,  
With scent of flowers from wood and field  
Breathes gentle fragrance everywhere.

## CHOICE

No fate compels the soul of man  
To sorrow or rejoice;  
There is no fate in earth or heaven  
But that of man's free choice.

## LIFE

INWOVEN wreaths of mist  
From the sea, blown  
To islands far remote,  
And lands unknown.

## YOUTH AND AGE

“ PLEASURE! ” cries Youth, “ ’tis pleasure  
I demand;  
With eager lip the crystal cup I drain.”  
Sighs weary Age, “ I do remember well,  
And am content if quiet ease remain.”



## CHURCH AND STATE

BEHOLD the wedding of the Church and  
State!

And lo, the bitter bridal of despair!  
The one doth justice barter to the priest,  
With gold the other chokes the mouth of  
Prayer.

## THE INNER WORSHIP

BY too much incense the idol is ob-  
scured,—

The pomp of worship blinds our feeble  
sight;

The heavenly vision waits not our com-  
mand,—

The heart outweighs all holy word and  
rite.

## WHY?

WHY should you die before you die?  
Cross bridges e'er you reach the stream?  
If life be as men say, a sleep,  
Sleep on, sweetheart, and dream your  
dream.

## "HOW DO CHERRIES TASTE?"

How do cherries taste?  
I cannot tell;  
But the children know,  
And birds as well.

## THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

DEAR cricket on my lonely hearth,  
The winter-snows are drifting now;  
Your quiet chirp through all the night  
Brings Autumn thoughts of bird and  
bough.

## YOUTH ATTRACTIVE

ON the lips of Experience  
Lives the larger truth;  
Yet sweeter sounds the callow voice  
Of shallow Youth.

## A NEW ENGLAND HOUSEWIFE

THROUGH all her life 'twas dust and only  
dust her thought engaged;  
Some dust was real, but more her nim-  
ble mind supplied;  
The poet's art she scorned, the painter's  
skill despised;  
For dust she lived, and dying, "Dust to  
dust!" she cried.

## POPULAR ROMANCE

FROM out our minds how swift the stories  
slip,—  
It matters not!  
The worthless stuff men print, and fools  
devour,  
Is well forgot.

## THE BEST CREED

So many creeds my faith demands,  
I know not which to choose;  
Perhaps the best is, after all  
The one I best can use.

## COMPOUNDING FOR SINS WE ARE INCLINED TO

WITHOUT a scratch our modern sinners  
'scape,  
While pulpit wrestlers thrash the an-  
cient Jews;  
Loud roars the wicked world with laugh-  
ter wild,  
To see the ducats drop from wealthy  
pews.

## DRIFT-WOOD

UPON my hearth the drift-wood burns  
Rude waves have brought me from afar :  
Across the sea my children went,—  
To-night I wonder where they are.

## PREACHING VERSUS PRACTICE

“ BRISKLY venture,” wrote the poet,  
“ Briskly roam ”;  
Yet how well the German singer  
Loved his home.

## THE HOUR

DOST in God believe? —  
What canst thou achieve?  
Hast thou the power?  
Behold the hour!

## FINESSE

MAKE all your words, good friend, and  
every deed  
To please the luckless scamp who shares  
your time;  
Seem most to yield when most you have  
your way,  
And unperceived, by slow degrees still  
climb.

## HATEFUL LOVE

O, HATEFUL Love forever on the wing,  
I feel the fiery torment of thy sting!  
Like cruel wasp, no mercy hast thou now,  
'Tis always sigh, or hope, or fear, or vow.

## PEACE AT LAST

IN pain my gentle mother gave me birth,  
And always Sorrow sat beside my hearth;  
E'er sinks the sun, and all my troubles  
cease,  
Turned sixty, grant me, Lord, a little  
peace.



## DR. GIRTH

WHO rests beneath this stone concerns thee  
not;  
To be unknown was always his sad lot;  
But if thou must his humble name unearth,  
Know this: it rhymes with what he lacked  
—sweet Mirth.

## TO A PLAGIARIST

YOU stole my gold and I upbraided not,  
I gave you more to help you in your  
need;  
But when you stole my songs you stole my  
heart,  
And "Thief" I brand you for your  
shameless greed.

## MODERN EDEN

OUR rights are many and our duties are but  
few:

To live, be happy, and forever free;  
These unforbidden fruits in Modern Eden  
grew —

Three golden apples on a single tree.

## THE FOOL'S SUCCESS

WROTE Pope: "Fools rush in where an-  
gels fear to tread."

'Tis so. The stupid fools we load with  
scorn

In life's great race ofttimes come boldly out  
ahead,

And blow with lusty throat their vulgar  
horn.

## PROCRASTINATION

WISDOM too late they learn,  
Who learn not now ;  
Vain is the search for fruit  
On winter bough.

“ YOU CANNOT MAKE A SILVER  
CUP FROM A PEWTER POT ”

ON every street her silken garments trail,  
But her rude manners tell the tale of  
youth ;  
We strive to seem what we can never be,  
And while we lie, behold we tell the  
truth.

## WINE

IN sun and shower the purple clusters  
grow,  
Their branches swing with ev'ry dancing  
breeze  
That softly whispers: " Song, and picture  
fair,  
And world-wide wisdom dwell in these."

## OPIUM

FORBIDDEN fruit! Yet he who eats se-  
renely lives,  
And where he will his tranquil soul may,  
dreaming, dwell;  
Yet nevermore by light or gloom may he  
discern  
If he be safe in Paradise or locked in  
Hell.

## TOBACCO

THE shadows fall, and evening brings repose,—  
From friendly pipe the fragrant clouds ascend;  
O sweet consoler of life's toil and grief,  
In thee at last all pain and sorrow end!

## THE WRONG NAME

How oft the Providence Divine  
For our *improvidence* we blame;  
“ 'Tis just my luck! ” we rashly cry,  
Where “ fault ” or “ slip ” were better name.

## EPITAPHS

### I

PLUCK now a flower for memory's sake,  
If e'er you knew the dead;  
White for the pure and stainless faith,  
For life's high noon the red.

### II

THE huntsman chased the luckless fawn  
Across the distant lea;  
So Death, forever swift of foot,  
Pursued and captured me.

### III

ENVIOUS Death pursued my child,  
And tore him from my breast;  
The bough remains, but on the earth  
Low lies the ruined nest.

### IV

DEATH waited long for me;  
Now here I must remain,  
The friend of flower and weed,  
Bright sun and falling rain.

## MODERN GREEKS

FOREVER talking, talking, talking were the  
Greeks of old:

“Winged words” of Homer, mystery  
of song.

Still they speak with voice triumphant,  
never ceasing;

We are theirs, and ever they to us be-  
long.

## AT LAST

WE once imagined what we now believe,  
We now believe where knowledge waits  
for all;

Stepwise we rise: from what eternal height,  
Long years to come, shall man, trium-  
phant, fall!



## THE CANDLE OF THE LORD

IF God will light His candle in my heart,  
The candle on the altar may depart;  
For in my breast, behold, that inner light  
Makes e'en the heavenly glory darker  
night.

## TOO MANY CHURCHES

WHEN Father Taylor saw ten churches in  
a row,  
"These are the devil's inns," he cried,  
"right well I know!  
The peace of God one church might mean,  
but never ten;  
For war these stand, and bitter hatred  
among men."

## NATURAL FAITH

SOME men believe, 'tis true, because they  
must,  
They were not formed to question and  
deny;  
I cannot think a trick of birth has made  
One man to live, another man to die.

## THE HOLY LAND

MEN deem the shores of Jordan holy land,  
But why more holy than their native  
strand?  
Are not all countries one to him who knows  
Alike in all the flower of mercy grows?

## SELF-CONCEIT

STRONG doubts of self the noblest minds  
distress,—

Great Shakspeare may have thought  
himself a fool;

But Tupper, if he ever thought at all,  
Believed the world to him should go to  
school.

## THE WALKING DELEGATE

“MY country, ’tis of thee!”—so in the  
church they sing:

“Sweet land of liberty!”—that means no  
rule of king:

Take warning, sovereigns all, behold ap-  
proaching fate!

We have one master now — the Walking  
Delegate.

## POLITICIANS

GOD send us politicians by the score,  
A hundred thousand bosses, if not more;  
Their self-effacing spirit and their love of  
truth  
Inspire new virtues in the heart of youth.

## THE NIHILIST

WHAT would the hater of all lands and  
men?  
Himself! himself! and but himself  
alone!  
His cruel way to have, with one fell blow  
he'd wreck  
Both lowly cabin and the royal throne.

## LEZE MAJESTY

THE Ten Commandments stand revised:  
“ Take not the Kaiser’s name in vain ”—  
That awful name great England fears,  
France, Russia, and the mighty Spain.

## THE LAND OF LABOR-STRIKES

“ THE Land of Freedom! ”—’tis a name  
the Sophomore likes,  
But truer name is this: “ The Land of  
Labor-strikes! ”  
There is no reason Mike or Jake should  
work an hour;  
They came not here to work, but only to  
devour.

## PROTECTION

TEN thousand vast monopolies  
Stand trembling at the door :  
“ We are such feeble folk,” they cry,  
“ Protect us, we implore.”

## BONDAGE

VAST time and space the human mind con-  
ceives,  
And then of both becomes the willing  
slave ;  
A narrow world immures the living man —  
Perhaps he'll leave his bondage in the  
grave.

## LIKE CURES LIKE

THE laughter of the world rings thin  
Upon the heart that knows its grief;  
Tears are less sad to one who mourns,  
And sorrow is its own relief.

## THE TRUE BROTHER

THY brother is not thine by blood alone,  
But by the tender heart, and just, and  
true;  
Such dost thou know? To him cleave  
evermore,  
For brothers of the heart are far and  
few.

## VAIN SEARCH

MEN search the world for Christ,  
And scale the heavens above;  
Yet never in their hearts  
Discern His changeless love.

## TRUTH OR REPOSE

WE have one choice — 'tis truth or mean  
repose;  
The sacred flower of wisdom only grows  
Far up the rugged steep, and pathless  
height,  
While to repose the fragrant vales invite.



## ONCE

A SINGLE night she curled her hair,  
And dreamed of golden ringlets fair;  
But once — Ah! that was why she failed,  
For never yet has “once” availed.

## THE NEW AGE

“HITCH thy wagon,” wrote the sage, “un-  
to a star:”

He lived before the age of the motor car.  
Now hitched our world is to the lightning’s  
speed —

Of sage and star alike we have scant need.

## THE LARGER KNOWLEDGE

COULD I but find the secret  
In the heart of some poor weed,  
I'd win a larger knowledge  
Than is locked in your small creed.

## PROFANITY

WHY do we shudder at the ruffian's oath  
profane,  
When every day the miser takes God's  
name in vain?  
The one roars out his oath, the other acts  
his curse:  
I think the miser's imprecation is the  
worse.

## “ MY LIFE IS WIND ”

ARE then the dead not dead?  
Or have the living life?  
Man is like wind and tide,  
And all his days are strife.

## EVERYWHERE IS PEACE

THE weary day declines in cool, refreshing  
night,  
Along the hills the shadows deepen, fades  
the light  
From out the quiet blue, and all at length  
is still.  
It matters little: day and darkness work  
God's will.



# TRANSLATIONS



## WOMAN'S SWORD

THE tongue is woman's sword, and to it  
she doth trust;  
By constant use she keeps it always free  
from rust;  
Deep in the heart of man she sheathes its  
glittering blade;  
And lo! the mighty hero falls before the  
timid maid.

*From the French*

## THE COST OF PROSECUTION

THE judge wants money, and the lawyer  
too,  
And when the long-protracted case is  
through,  
There'll not a franc be left, my friend, for  
you —  
A franc? — they'll leave you not a sou.

*From the French*

## ADIEU

ADIEU! adieu, thou fair and cruel one!

'Tis done, thy scorn I little reck!

I haste me now love's burning grief to  
quench —

To hang? — Yes, round another's neck.

*From the French*

## THE UNEQUAL MARRIAGE

AH, poorly matched were e'en the heavenly  
pair;

Celestial Psyche, spirit clear and free,  
New wisdom gained with every flying year,  
But laughing Amor, still a child was he.

*Goethe*



## THE SOLDIER'S SOLACE

IN truth no lack is here I do believe :  
The bread is white, the maidens dark as  
    eve !  
Next night unto another town I go :  
Black is the bread, the maidens white as  
    snow !

*Goethe*

## EACH LIKES BEST THE PLACE WHEREIN HE LIVES

So wisely hath the Lord God framed these  
    human souls of ours,  
    That each likes best the place where he  
    doth dwell :  
Ask the lost spirits where Perdition is,  
    they'll say in Heaven ;  
Ask saints, they'll tell you 'tis in Hell.

*Goethe*

## TO A METAPHYSICIAN

OVER the azure sky  
Your cobwebs weave;  
I profit by my life,  
Nor stop to grieve.

*Goethe*

## APPARENT DEATH

WEEP, maiden, o'er the lonely tomb of  
Love;  
He died of nothing who by chance was  
slain.  
But is he truly dead? — Ah, that I dare  
not say:  
A merest chance might give him life  
again.

*Goethe*

## ON DR. MEAD

WHEN Mead unto the lonely Styx was  
come,  
With trembling voice affrighted Pluto  
said:  
“ Confound him ! once the sightless and the  
dumb  
He saved, and now he would restore the  
dead ! ”

*Lessing*

## THE EVENING HOUR

ALL day the restless feet of eager men,  
The ceaseless strife for gain and place  
and power,  
And then the gentle darkness cool and still,  
The calm refreshment of the evening  
hour.

*From the German*

## SPIRITUAL EPIGRAMS.

### I

Ah, yes! I would a Phœnix be,  
And burn my heart in Deity!  
There should I dwell by His dear side,  
And in the self of God abide.

### II

I DO believe there is no death;  
Though every hour I die,  
Yet every hour, with new delight,  
A better life draws nigh.

### III

I HOLD that since by death alone  
God bids my soul go free,  
In death a richer blessing is  
Than all the world to me.

### IV

THE cross of Golgotha can never save  
Thy soul from deeper hell,  
Unless with loving faith thou sett'st it up  
Within thy heart as well.

*Angelus Silesius*

## BALAAM'S ASS

BALAAM's ass beheld the shining angel  
stand

With flaming sword his path before;  
The prophet, blinded by his sinful heart,  
Saw but the ass and nothing more.

*Latin of the Fifteenth Century*

## ON A FLY ENGRAVED IN A GOLDEN DRINKING-CUP

IN golden cup of sparkling wine  
I drew my latest breath:  
How could I seek a nobler tomb,  
Or crave a sweeter death?

*Cunradinus*

## EPIGRAMS FROM MARTIAL

### I

#### TO AVITUS

OF all these epigrams a few are good,  
And some are fair, and others bad;  
No other way, my dear Avitus, could  
So large a book as this be had.

### II

#### AN INSECT IN AMBER

UPON an unsuspecting ant a drop of amber  
fell,  
When lo! the insect we so oft despise  
Is changed, as by a sudden stroke of light,  
into a gem  
We more than gold of Ophir seek and  
prize.

### III

#### ON FABULLUS

SWEET the fragrance — much it pleased  
me,  
But I nothing had to eat;  
He is like a corpse, anointed,  
Who hath perfume for his meat.

### IV

#### TO AFRICANUS

IN gold and silver Africanus rolls,  
And seeks for more from rise to set of  
sun:  
To some great Fortune gives too much;  
alas!  
That wayward goddess gives enough to  
none.



V

IMPROMPTU VERSES

OH, why, my Stella, so severe a task?  
Impromptu verses at the feast you ask:  
But since you thus insist I must comply,  
And if they're poor you know the reason  
why.

VI

ON QUINTUS

QUINTUS loves Thaïs — what! — that  
squint-eyed, one-eyed girl?  
By mighty Jove, the fellow's far more  
blind than she!  
For Thaïs wants one eye, but Quintus —  
he wants two:  
His foolish love for Thaïs proves he can-  
not see.

## VII

### THE COOK

'Tis not enough to have the art  
Savory dishes to prepare;  
The cook must know his master's heart,  
His ev'ry wish and taste must share.

### SOCRATES

GREAT Socrates, the wisest and the best of  
men,  
Was not ashamed that Alcibiades of old  
Should find him with the children, and  
astride a stick,  
Or wild with noisy sport as in the dust  
he rolled.

*Latin Anthology*

## GREEK EPIGRAM

IF it were true, as some have boldly said,  
That in the grave the wise and mighty  
    dead  
Have sense and knowledge sacred things  
    to seize,  
I'd hang myself to see Euripides.

## ARISTOPHANES

THE Graces sought a sacred shrine,  
    For songs of love and peace;  
And lo! they found it in the soul  
    Of Aristophanes.

*Greek Anthology*

## THE DEADLY PRESENCE

No fatal herb to Aristagoras did Agis give,  
He merely entered and his host was  
dead.

Ye coffin-makers, pelt this living aconite  
with flowers;  
With rosy chaplets crown his mighty  
head.

*Hedylus*

## THE GIFT OF THE MUSES

WITH old Herodotus one day the Muses  
came to dine;  
And when they left th' historian's board all  
gay with sparkling wine,  
They gave him — 'twas a priceless gift  
from the immortal Nine —  
The peerless books that evermore his name  
with theirs enshrine.

*From the Greek*

## MORTALITY

THOU art a mortal man by human frailty  
girt,  
'Tis this the sum of wise philosophy to  
learn;  
To-day thou rul'st a mighty empire with  
thy frown,—  
To-morrow, crownless, shalt thou fill the  
funeral urn.

*Menander*

## EQUALITY IN THE GRAVE

MANES when living was a humble slave,  
But Death hath crown'd his brow;  
And in the grave, great king Darius, know  
That slave's as great as thou.

*Anyte of Tegea*

## CURES FOR LOVE

SHARP pangs of hunger may love's raging  
fever cure,  
Or years of absence passion's fury alter;  
But if the flame burn on thou canst no  
more endure,  
Why, friend, I do advise thee buy a  
halter.

*Crates of Thebes*

## ON THOSE WHO FELL AT THERMOPYLÆ

GREAT glory thus it is to bravely die  
Upon thy holy field, Thermopylæ:  
Above our dust an altar rear divine,  
Since sacred Greece and liberty are thine.

*Greek Epitaph*

## SECRECY

THY friend hath still another friend,  
And he a friend as well;  
Be silent, lest to all the world  
Their lips the secret tell.

*From the Hebrew*

## GAIN STRENGTH BY HELPING OTHERS

DISTRESS not with thy troubles other  
souls,  
Since life hath thorns enough for all;  
With kind and tender heart and helpful  
hand,  
Gain strength by lifting those who fall.

*Saadi*

## INTOXICATION

WHOM the ruby wine doth intoxicate,  
Shall sober when the fumes are blown  
away;  
But whom the cupbearer doth intoxicate,  
Shall sober not until judgment-day.  
*Saadi*

## THE SAINT'S REPLY

UNTO a saint a mighty monarch said:  
"How often dost thou think of me?"  
The holy man made answer thus: "O  
king,  
When I forget the Lord I think of  
thee."  
*Saadi*



## THE UNITY OF FAITH

KINE are of divers colors, but they all milk  
the same;  
Altar flowers are not alike, but worship is  
one flame;  
Systems of faith may differ with every  
changing zone;  
But God, unchanging ever, remaineth God  
alone.

*Vemana*

## ENVY PURSUES THE FRUITFUL

REJOICE, O my soul, and be glad,  
When Envy speaks evil of thee!  
Sticks, and stones, and clods of the field  
Are cast at the fruit-bearing tree.

*From the Persian*

## THE PRESENT HEAVEN

LOOK not beyond the stars for Heaven,  
Nor 'neath the sea for Hell;  
Know thou who leads a useful life  
In Paradise doth dwell.

*Hafiz*

## WHAT NEED OF SACRED HOUSE?

ALL forms of faith one holy object have;  
All men the Loved One seek with constant care;  
And since the world is Love's fair dwelling-place,  
Why talk of mosque or sacred house of prayer?

*Hafiz*

## THE DIVINE DEMAND

GOD will not seek thy race,  
Nor will He ask thy birth;  
Alone He will demand of thee,  
“What hast thou done on earth?”  
*From the Persian*

## MUCH IN LITTLE

IN the eye of a gnat an elephant sleeps,  
Thousands of harvests the corn-kernel  
keeps,  
A dewdrop the banished Euphrates doth  
hold,  
And a mustard-seed doth the Almighty  
enfold.

*From the Persian*

## THE APPOINTED HOUR

No child of man may perish e'er his time  
arrives,  
A thousand arrows pierce him, and he still  
survives;  
But when the moment fixed in Heaven's  
eternal will  
Comes round, a single blade of yielding  
grass may kill.

*From the Mahabharata*

## THE WORDS OF THE WISE ARE FEW

OF all the lands where mighty forests  
grow,  
But few that bear the sandalwood I know;  
In every clime the wise and good I view,  
And yet, alas! their golden words are few.

*Saskya Pandita*

## HOW TO BECOME A SAINT

IN every human heart a herd of swine,  
With hoof unclean and vile and greedy  
snout,  
Trample upon God's fragrant flowers di-  
vine:  
Wouldst be a saint? Then drive the  
creatures out.

*From the Sanscrit*

## THE BRAHMIN'S DELIGHT

Two things the noble Brahmin's heart de-  
light:  
A friend whose love is always warm and  
true,  
And holy songs from sacred volumes  
learned;  
He lives contented who may claim the  
two.

*From the Sanscrit*

## THE RIGHT ROAD

FOLLOW Moses and Amram, and press on  
in this road

Until you hear the solemn words, " I am  
Deity! "

So long as the mount of being remains be-  
fore you,

The answer to " Show me " is, " Thou  
shalt not behold Me."

*Mahomet in the Gulshan-i-Raz*

## STOLEN GLANCES

THOU mean and sour-faced eunuch, listen  
well,

And every word I breathe, unto thy master  
tell!

But thou canst not the secret meaning spy,  
That lingers in the sweeter language of the  
eye.

*Beha-ed-din Zohein*

## PILGRIMAGE

To lighten my sins to Mecca I went,  
And thought at the mosque my guilt to  
repent;  
From Caaba the holy and Zem-Zem I came,  
And my burden of guilt was exactly the  
same.

*From the Arabic*

## FERTILE OF RESOURCES

A FOOT of water in the tank,  
Yet in he plunged and down he sank;  
The water came not to his knees,  
And yet he swam about with ease.

*From the Arabic*



## TRUE GENEROSITY

HE only is generous  
Whose gift,  
By willing hand proffered,  
Is swift.

*From the Arabic*

## THE UNHALLOWED DEAD

IF the winding-sheet be ragged and old,  
The corpse-washer be one-eyed and  
mean,  
The bier be broken, and the burial-ground  
salt,  
The dead belongeth in hell I ween.

*From the Arabic*



## THE TRUE COUNSELLOR

HE alone can counsel give  
Of all his tribe,  
Whom death cannot affright,  
Nor treasure bribe.

*From the Arabic*









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